

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Armenian separatist forces surrender

Agree to ceasefire after Azerbaijani offensive; dozens killed, hundreds injured during ops

REUTERS, Yerevan

Armenian separatist forces in Azerbaijan's breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh surrendered and agreed to a ceasefire yesterday, 24 hours after Baku began an offensive to restore full control of its territory.

Under the agreement, confirmed by both sides and effective from 1:00 pm (0900 GMT) yesterday, separatist forces will disarm and talks on the future of the region and the ethnic Armenians who live there will start on Thursday.

Separatists running the self-styled "Republic of Artsakh" said they had been forced to agree to Azerbaijan's terms - relayed by Russian peacekeepers - after Baku's army broke through their lines and seized a number of strategic locations while the world did nothing.

"The authorities of the Republic of Artsakh accept the proposal from the command of the Russian peacekeeping



contingent to cease fire," they said in a statement. Azerbaijan confirmed a ceasefire deal had been reached.

The outcome would appear to pave the way for Azerbaijan to integrate around 120,000 ethnic Armenians into its society - a prospect some Armenians say they fear - and to take full control of a mountainous area that has been at the centre of two wars since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

Armenia, which says it has no military forces in Karabakh despite Azerbaijani assertions, did not intervene militarily. It has accused Baku of trying to ethnically cleanse Karabakh, something Azerbaijan has denied.

It was unclear how many ethnic Armenians would opt to stay in Karabakh or whether there would be a large exodus to Armenia.

Azerbaijan's military operation, in which dozens were killed and hundreds injured, faced sharp criticism from the United States and some European countries.



In this handout videograb of a footage taken and released by the Russian Defence Ministry yesterday, Russian peacekeepers help to evacuate refugees from Stepanakert, the capital of Karabakh, after Azerbaijan launched offensive on the region.

PHOTO: AFP

UNGA ADDRESS

Erdogan raises Kashmir issue

PTI, United Nations

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan raised the issue of Kashmir during his address to world leaders at the high-level 78th session of the UN general assembly session here. "Another development that will pave the way for regional peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia will be the establishment of a just and lasting peace in Kashmir through dialogue and cooperation between India and Pakistan," Erdogan said in his address to the General Debate Tuesday. "As Turkiye, we will continue to support the steps to be taken in this direction," he said. His comment comes weeks after he met PM Narendra Modi on sidelines of G20 Summit in Delhi during which both leaders discussed strengthening relations.

Iran demands US show goodwill

REUTERS, United Nations

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said on Tuesday that the United States should prove its "goodwill and determination" to revive Tehran's 2015 nuclear pact as months of indirect talks between the long-time foes have led nowhere. "By exiting the JCPOA, the United States violated the agreement and the principle of good faith. America should demonstrate its goodwill and determination," Raisi said in a speech at the General Assembly, referring to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Tehran and six world powers. Former president Donald Trump reneged on that deal in 2018, arguing it was too generous, and restored harsh sanctions on Iran.

Lula warns UN of coup risk in Guatemala

REUTERS, United Nations

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva warned world leaders at the United Nations on Tuesday of the prospect of a coup in Guatemala, echoing US concerns about risks to democracy in the Central American country after last month's election. "In Guatemala, there is a risk of a coup, which would impede the inauguration of the winner of democratic elections," Lula told the UN General Assembly. Last week, the top prosecutor's office in Guatemala raided electoral facilities and opened sealed ballots from the election, in which anti-graft President-elect Bernardo Arevalo and his Semilla Party overwhelmingly came out on top.

Climate crisis 'opened the gates to hell'

UN chief tells a summit of leaders at the UNGA

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday told world leaders humanity's addiction to fossil fuels had "opened the gates to hell" as he kicked off a climate meeting where leading polluters China and the United States were conspicuously absent.

Despite increasing extreme weather events and record-shattering global temperatures, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and oil and gas companies reap handsome profits.

Guterres has thus billed the "Climate Ambition Summit" as a "no nonsense" forum where leaders or cabinet ministers will announce specific actions that deliver on their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

In his opening speech, he evoked 2023's "horrendous heat" and "historic fires," but stressed: "The future is not fixed: It is for leaders like you to write."

"We can still limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees. We can still build a world of clear air, green jobs and affordable clean power for all," he said, referring to the target seen as needed to avoid long-term climate catastrophe.

The bar for the podium was set high, with the UN chief making clear that only leaders who had made concrete plans to achieve net-zero greenhouse emissions would be allowed to speak.

After receiving more than 100 applications to take part, the UN finally released a list on Tuesday night of 41 speakers which did not include China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan or India.

Several major leaders didn't bother making the trip to New York for this year's UN General Assembly, including President Xi Jinping of China and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak from the United Kingdom, who said he was too busy.

US President Joe Biden, who addressed the General Assembly on Tuesday, sent his climate envoy John Kerry to the meeting - although Kerry won't be permitted to speak in the segment reserved for "movers and doers."

"There's no doubt that the absence of so many leaders from the world's biggest economies and emitters will clearly have an impact on the outcomes of the summit," Alden Meyer of climate think tank E3G said.

He blamed competing issues - from the Ukraine conflict to US-China tensions and rising economic uncertainty -- but also the lobbying power of the fossil fuel industry.

Catherine Abreu, executive director of nonprofit Destination Zero, said it was "perhaps a good-news story that we see Biden not being given a speaking slot at



the summit" because the United States is continuing to expand fossil fuel projects even as it makes historic investments in renewables.

"I think about this as being a correction from past summits, where leaders have been given the opportunity to take credit for climate leadership on the global stage, while they continue to pursue plans to develop fossil fuels, and continue driving the climate crisis back at home," she added.

While the United States won't take the rostrum, California will be represented by Governor Gavin Newsom. From Britain, London Mayor Sadiq Khan will also attend.

The event is the biggest climate summit in New York since 2019, when Greta Thunberg stunned the world with her "How Dare You" speech before the UN.

Anger is building among climate activists, particularly younger people, who turned out in thousands last weekend for the "March to End Fossil Fuels" in New York.

Observers are eager however to see what Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and European Union President Ursula von der Leyen say both on their own goals and on financing commitments for the developing world.

Advanced economies vowed in 2009 to channel \$100 billion to less developed countries by the year 2020 -- a promise that was broken -- even as much of the funding that was mobilized came in the form of loans.

Meanwhile, a "loss and damage" fund aimed at providing financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change has still not been operationalized.

INDIAN PARLIAMENT

MPs approve bill to reserve third of seats for women

REUTERS, New Delhi

Lawmakers in India's lower house of parliament yesterday approved a bill to reserve 33 percent of seats in the lower house and state assemblies for women. The bill would now have to be approved by the upper house and at least half of India's state assemblies before being promulgated as law. While all parties have welcomed the bill and are expected to vote in favour, its implementation depends on a complex drill of population census and boundaries of political constituencies redrawn.

Modi invites Biden to India's Republic Day parade

TNN, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited US President Joe Biden to be the chief guest at the January 26 Republic Day celebrations during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit, America's ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said yesterday. Earlier, sources had said that India is planning to invite the leaders of the Quad countries for the Republic Day celebrations. Besides India and US, the other two members of Quad are Australia and Japan. Notably, India had invited the then US president Donald Trump for the Republic Day parade in 2018.

Air pollution from fires hits poorest hardest: study

AFP, Paris

People in poorer countries are disproportionately suffering from air pollution spewed from the increasing scourge of fires in forests and fields around the world, according to new research published yesterday. Landscape fires include blazes in forests, shrub, grass, pastures and agricultural lands, whether planned or uncontrolled such as the wildfires that have ravaged countries including Algeria, Canada and Greece this year. They generate smoke that can travel up to thousands of kilometres, creating public health risks, including increases in mortality and worsening of heart and lung-related illnesses. Ambient air pollution caused some 4.5 million deaths in 2019, according to a study published in Lancet Planetary Health.

AI both a risk and opportunity for journalism: study

AFP, London

AI is both a threat and an opportunity for journalism, with more than half of those surveyed for a new report saying they had concerns about its ethical implications on their work. While 85 percent of respondents had experimented with generative AI such as ChatGPT or Google Bard for tasks including writing summaries and generating headlines, 60 percent said they also had reservations. The study, carried out by the London School of Economic's JournalismAI initiative, surveyed over 100 news organisations from 46 countries between April and July.

Women mourn during the funeral of three Palestinians killed in an Israeli raid on the Jenin camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank, in the camp yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP